Concept Note: Emergency Response Fund

I. Context

In 2006, and early 2007, the humanitarian situation in the northeast and northwest of the Central African Republic deteriorated severely. One million people have been affected by violence, and another million are at risk. As of December 2007, almost 300,000 people have been displaced inside the country or as refugees abroad. To enable NGOs and UN agencies to get funding quickly to cover gaps or begin operations the Emergency Response Fund has been created. It is characterised by simplicity, flexibility, and speed.

II. Objectives

1. To enable NGOs (which cannot access the CERF directly) and in urgent cases UN agencies to respond quickly and effectively to the humanitarian situation in CAR by:
   - Making funds available to cover start-up costs; and
   - Making funds available in cases of rapidly changing circumstances where humanitarian gaps need to be filled and other donor mechanisms are unavailable.

2. To ensure that humanitarian needs are addressed in a collaborative spirit, fostering understanding and coordination within and between clusters and humanitarian organisations.

III. Mechanism

The ERF will support humanitarian projects (including assessments) in CAR in the following sectors: agriculture, coordination and support services, economic recovery and infrastructure, education, food, health, nutrition, protection/human rights/rule of law, security, shelter and non-food items, and water and sanitation.
The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), supported by OCHA, manages the ERF. UNDP, following a review of its experience in other countries and proposed improvements, disburses funds to recipients.

While there is no funding ceiling, grants are expected to range up to $250,000. Given that grants are for start-up or gap filling, they should be used within 26 weeks of disbursement. During this period recipients should work with standard donors to ensure follow-on funding.

The chef de mission or officer-in-charge of an established international NGO or a UN agency accredited with the Government of CAR may submit project proposals to the HC, supported by OCHA. Before doing so proposals must be discussed with and cleared by either the relevant cluster lead (when a proposal falls within a particular cluster) or by the Advisory Board (comprising one donor, 2 UN agencies, and two NGOs) when the proposal cuts across clusters. When a cluster lead submits a project within its own cluster, the members should be consulted before the project is submitted to the Advisory Board, together with the cluster members' comments. Except for emergency situations, at least two thirds of the members of a cluster have to comment on a project before the cluster lead can make a decision to recommend or reject the project, or to ask for a revision and resubmission. Cluster members may choose to either share their comments with all other cluster members or to send them directly to the cluster lead, who will ensure the anonymity of the cluster member, if requested. (Advisory Board membership will revolve to ensure that the Board not include the organisation whose proposal is under review.) NGO proposals will merit favourable consideration if they include specific plans for partnership with local NGOs and their capacity building.

Project proposals are to follow the same format used by the CAP and the CERF (attached).

The HC will consider proposals based on the recommendation of the relevant cluster or Advisory Board, only. Project proposals can be submitted to the HC, supported by OCHA, at any time. (Indeed, in order to mobilise and trigger response the HC can call for proposals.)

Once a project is submitted to the relevant cluster (or to the HC for cross-cluster projects) the following calendar will be respected:

Day 1 NGO or UN agency submits proposal to cluster lead.

Day 1 + 3 working days Cluster lead consults cluster members (via email or regular or ad hoc meetings). For cross-sectoral proposals the Advisory Board is consulted (via email or an ad hoc meeting). Any comments or requests for modifications on the project should be communicated by the cluster lead to the submitting organisation within four working days. The cluster lead or the Advisory Board may request a revision of the project, in which case an additional four working days should be counted from the moment of resubmission. If a project is not approved, the submitting organisation can appeal the cluster's decision directly to the HC.
Day 1 + 4 working days  
Cluster lead refers project to HC for approval / Submitting organisation appeals to the HC.

Day 1 + 5 working days  
The HC decides on proposals to be funded or sends the project back to the submitting organisation and either the relevant cluster or Advisory Board with comments (If the submitting organisation is appealing a cluster decision the HC can either call a meeting with the submitting organisation and the relevant cluster lead, or call an ad hoc Advisory Board meeting to come to a final decision.)

Day 1 + 8 working days  
Submitting organisations prepares work plan

Day 1 + 10 working days  
NGO or UN agency and UNDP sign contract.

Day 1 + 11 working days  
HC informs UNDP to disburse funds.

Day 1 + 20 working days  
Deadline for recipient to receive funds from UNDP.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities

*Roles and responsibilities of Clusters and participating NGOs and UN agencies*

NGOs or UN agencies accredited with the Government of CAR discuss proposals within the respective cluster if activities fall within one sector (or submit cross-sectoral proposals to the HC directly) and, following endorsement, send proposals to the HC.

NGOs or UN agencies send the HC one-page narrative and financial reports before a second or third instalment can be disbursed (instalments are usually no larger than USD 100,000). In case the project is no more than USD 100,000 but the project duration is six months, NGOs or UN agencies send the HC a mid-term narrative and financial update. Within two months of a project’s end, recipients send the HC a final report, including the following:

- Project results and how they correspond to objectives;
- Special achievements beyond those expected in the objectives;
- Percentage of target population (gender disaggregated) receiving assistance;
- Overall amount of humanitarian assistance delivered;
- Insufficient funding and its impact on any of the project’s implementation;
- Constraints not originally envisaged;
- How the project addressed cross-cutting issues, e.g. human rights and gender;
- Lessons drawn for the future; and
- Certified financial statement.
Cluster leads are responsible for consulting the cluster members on all proposals submitted to them, and communicate their decision to approve or reject to cluster members with supporting argumentation.

**Roles and responsibilities of the HC, supported by OCHA**
The HC oversees the work of the clusters and the Advisory Board, and makes final selection of projects, signs a contract with organisations receiving grants, and forwards them to UNDP.
The HC ensures that projects receiving ERF grants are then included in the CAP and posted on the Financial Tracking Service, as well as on the http://hcptcar.net
The HC, supported by the clusters, ensures that NGOs and UN agencies monitor activities.
The HC, supported by OCHA and the Advisory Board, reviews the ERF each quarter.

**Roles and responsibilities of UNDP**
UNDP disburses funds to recipients within ten working days of contract receipt. UNDP monitors NGO and UN agency use of funds via financial statements sent to HC.

**Roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Board**
The Advisory Board reviews proposals that cut across sectors or that are submitted by a cluster lead within its own cluster.
The Advisory Board meets quarterly to review the ERF’s functioning and advise the HC on changes or refinements to be made.